DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 042 404 HE 001 624

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TITLE Cultural Sophistication and the College Experience.
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SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Mental Health (DHEW), Bethesda, Md.
PUB DATE [70]
NOTE 8p.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.50
DESCRIPTORS Art, *Changing Attitudes, *College Environment, College Students, Culture, *Higher Education, Institutional Environment, *Intellectual Development, Literature, Music, *Student Interests

ABSTRACT

This report describes 3 studies that attempted to determine the impact of college on cultural sophistication. The studies focused on items relating to student's interest in and liking for poetry, fiction, serious or classical music, and modern art. These items were completed first by entering freshmen in September 1965 at the 7 colleges that participate in the Project on Student Development in Small Colleges, and again in the spring of 1967 by those students enrolled. The studies examined: (1) net change for all entering re-tested students; (2) change for re-tested students who responded "moderately" at entrance; and (3) relationship between change in the "moderate" category and institutional characteristics. Some of the major findings were that: (1) small net changes toward increased cultural sophistication occur for some students at some colleges, but not at other colleges; (2) among students who "moderately" enjoy poetry, fiction, classical music, and modern art at entrance, enjoyment increases quite consistently for women, but frequently decreases for men; (3) differences in college climates, student characteristics and peer relationships, educational practices, and student-faculty contacts are associated with changes in cultural sophistication; (4) changes do not seem to be associated with extracurricular participation in drama, music, art, broadcasting, journalism and literary activities. (AF)

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CULTURAL SOPHISTICATION AND THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE[1]

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Most colleges cite increasing intellectual interests and cultural sophistication as major objectives. Yet in the early 60's when Nevitt Sanford edited The American College[2] few studies had been reported concerning student change in these areas. By 1969, however, Feldman and Newcomb[3] could include several studies of change as part of their comprehensive literature review. These studies generally found net change toward increased interest in the arts and humanities as measured by the Humanistic scale of the Stern Activities Index or by the Estheticism scale of the Omnibus Personality Inventory. The eight college study of McConnell et al,[4] however, found decreasing estheticism scores for men and for women at some colleges. The general question of college impacts on cultural sophistication, therefore, remains open. Further, there is very little information concerning the particular influences of varied college environments and educational practices. The research summarized here suggests some relationships worth attention and worth more detailed examination.

The studies focused on four items from the Cultural Sophistication scale of the College Student Questionnaire published by Educational Testing Service, and were carried on for seven colleges participating in the Project on Student Development in Small Colleges. The items were completed first by entering freshmen in September, 1965, and again in spring, 1967 by those students enrolled.

The items were; "How much do you enjoy reading poetry?" "How well do you like fiction?" "How well do you like serious or 'classical' music?" "How well do you like modern art?" Each item offered three options, "Very much," "Moderately," "Not much." For economy and variety of expression we adopt the Educational Testing Service term "cultural sophistication," but note that in this context it really means increased enjoyment of poetry, fiction, classical music, and modern art.

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[1]The research completed here is part of the Project on Student Development in Small Colleges which was supported by NIMH Grant #14780-05. Dennis Campagna carried major responsibility for exploratory studies and final data analyses.

[2]Sanford, N. (Ed.) The American College. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1962.

[3]Feldman, K. A., & Newcomb, T. M. The impact of college on students. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969.

[4]McConnell, T. R., Clark, B., Heist, P., Trow, M., & Yonge, G. Student development during the college years. Forthcoming.

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A series of three studies examined, (a) net change for all entering students re-tested after two years, (b) change for re-tested students who responded "Moderately" at entrance, and (c) relationships between change in "Moderates" and institutional characteristics. Data from seven of the thirteen Project colleges were employed--colleges which differ in student characteristics, goals, general climate, teaching practices, and student-faculty relationships.[5]

To assess the general direction of change men and women were grouped separately at each college, on each of the four items, irrespective of their responses at entrance. This process created 28 groups of men (4 items times seven colleges), substantially but was not identical. There were, then, 56 sets of test-retest data. After two years, 36 of these reflected more frequent enjoyment of poetry, fiction, classical music, or modern art. and 20 reflected less frequent enjoyment. Only seven of these changes reached statistical significance, but of these, six were toward increasing enjoyment. Generally speaking, then, there are two major findings concerning net change: (a) small changes toward increased cultural sophistication do occur, (b) at <u>some</u> colleges.

But figures reflecting change for a group of diverse persons may not accurately reflect changes for individual members of the group, or for sub-groups within the larger population. Nor do they always reflect the presence or absence of institutional impact.[6] Similar scores at two points in time, for a heterogeneous group, may mask changes for sub-groups which have neutralized each other when combined. For this reason, and to exercise some control for student characteristics and for "floor" and "ceiling" effects, re-tested students who answered "Moderately" at entrance were selected for special study.

When the findings for the seven colleges are pooled, the general figures for change among groups of Moderates are similar to those for net change. Of 56 possible cases, 10 show no change, 27 increase, and 19 decrease. But the differences between men and women Moderates are dramatic. Scores for women rise in 20 cases and drop in only 3; scores for men drop in 16 cases and rise in only 7. Among "Moderates" then, women quite consistently reflect <u>more</u> frequent enjoyment of poetry, fiction, classical music, and modern art, and men

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[5]See, for example, Chickering, A. W. <u>Education and Identity</u>. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969, and Chickering, A. W., McDowell, J., & Campagna, D. Institutional differences and student development. <u>Journal of Educational Psychology</u>. August, 1969.

[6]See, for example, Chickering, A.W. FD's and SD's - Neglected data in institutional research. <u>Proceedings, Association for Institutional Research, Annual Forum</u>. 1968.; Chickering, A.W. <u>Education and Identity</u>. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969; Corey, S. M. Changes in the opinions of female students after one year at a university. <u>Journal of Social Psychology</u>, 11, 1940, 341-351; and Finney, H.C. Development and change of political libertarianism among Berkeley undergraduates. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1967.

only somewhat less consistently reflect less frequent enjoyment of such cultural activities.

More importantly perhaps, at this level of analysis differences in student change from college to college begin to become more clear and consistent. At one institution, for example, scores rise in six of the eight possible cases (men and women separately for four items) and drop in only one case; at another college, scores drop in seven of the eight cases. Now the question is, "Are differences in the characteristics of the colleges systematically related to the different amounts and directions of student change?"

Though all seven colleges studied are small, with enrollments of 1500 or less, there are significant differences among them. Relationships between student change and institutional characteristics were examined in five general areas: (a) institutional climate or "press," (b) student characteristics and peer relationships, (c) extracurricular participation, (d) teaching practices and activities, and (e) student-faculty contacts.

The College and University Environment Scales, completed by samples of 100 students at each college, provided information about variation in college climates. The findings are not surprising. Increased cultural sophistication was positively related to institutional emphases on Awareness and Scholarship--stress on awareness of self, of society, and of esthetic stimuli, and interest in ideas as ideas, knowledge for its own sake, and intellectual discipline. Change in cultural sophistication was negatively related to Propriety and Practicality--stress on conventional standards of decorum, and a practical, instrumental emphasis where knowing the right people, being in the right groups, and doing what is expected, are important.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that the most potent forces for change in colleges are the students themselves, their characteristics, and the characteristics of the student cultures they establish. These findings for cultural sophistication are no exception. There were consistently positive relationships between increasing cultural sophistication and the proportions of entering freshmen at each college who indicated that they "Very much" enjoy poetry, fiction, classical music, and modern art. But friendships which developed in college also play a part. When "Intellectual exchange and challenge" occurred "to an important extent" with best friends of the same or opposite sex, and with the primary friendship group, increased cultural sophistication occurred more frequently. And the same is true when "Increasing the range of my feelings and sensibilities (esthetic, social, spiritual)" was an important part of the relationship. These findings, and the others reported below, come from The Experience of College Questionnaire completed by samples of 200 students at each college.

We expected that extracurricular participation in drama, music, and art, or in broadcasting, journalism, or literary activities would be strongly associated with student change in cultural sophistication. But they were not. The relationships were so low as to be inconsequential. These findings, especially in the light of those concerning peer relationships, suggest that the informal contacts among students, and the experiences and activities which they pursue together have an impact, while the more formal activities do not.

Teaching practices and study activities also were associated with changes in cultural sophistication. At colleges where students more frequently reported that "lectures followed the textbook closely" less change occurred; where students more frequently argued openly with the instructor or with each other during class, more change occurred. Students also indicated the amount of time spent in six different "Mental activities"[7] while studying for class; memorizing, interpreting, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating. Consistently negative relationships were predicted, reasoning that strong emphasis on the development of such cognitive skills, leading to heavy time investments there, would work against increased enjoyment of poetry, fiction, classical music, or modern art--increased enjoyment essentially being an affective phenomenon. Though no relationships reached statistical significance, they were consistently negative. "Reasons for studying" also were associated with changes in cultural sophistication. Where "To get a good grade" and "To finish a requirement" were most frequently the major reasons for study, less change occurred. Where study more frequently was pursued "Because it interested me, I enjoyed it," more change occurred.

Of all the areas studied, however, student-faculty contact was most strongly and consistently associated with increasing enjoyment of poetry, fiction, classical music, and modern art. As the number of different faculty members talked with outside of class "for more than five minutes" increased from college to college, so did the magnitude of change in cultural sophistication. As the number of different conversations "lasting more than five minutes" increases, so does cultural sophistication.

In brief, then, these are the major findings concerning cultural sophistication and college experience. Small net changes toward increased cultural sophistication occur for some students at some colleges--but not at other colleges. Among students who "Moderately" enjoy poetry, fiction, classical music, and modern art at entrance, enjoyment increases quite consistently for women, but frequently decreases for men. Differences in college climates, in student characteristics and peer relationships, in educational practices, and in student-faculty contacts are systematically associated with changes in cultural sophistication. Such changes apparently are not associated with extracurricular participation in drama, music, and art, or broadcasting, journalism, and literary activities.

These findings have implications for both research and practice. Shifting from study of net change to study of similar subgroups, "Moderates," at different institutions was like wiping foggy goggles clean. Whether change was occurring, where it was occurring, and for whom, became much more clear. And with that increased clarity came a more solid basis for study of pertinent institutional characteristics.

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[7] Bloom, B. S., Englehart, M. D., Hill, W. H., Furst, E. J., & Krathwohl, D. R. Taxonomy of educational objectives, Handbook I: Cognitive domain. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1956.

There also is an issue concerning the college "environment" and its assessment. Some of the strongest relationships did not occur for the College and University Environment Scales--general measures of "institutional climate" or "environmental press" as perceived by students. Stronger relationships occurred instead for measures of the daily concrete experiences of students as reflected by the Experience of College Questionnaire. A similar study of changing beliefs in civil liberties[8] also used data from both these instruments and found stronger relationships for measures of direct experience. Is it the general environment as perceived--as I describe it to myself and to others--that has an impact? Or is it the stream of experiences and behavior which influences student development most? The findings suggest that both are relevant, but not identical. Research to understand the impact of complex institutions should assess both the environment as perceived, and the environment as a set of direct experiences and behaviors.

The findings also have practical implications. The evidence indicates that cultural sophistication increases much more frequently for women than for men. These contrasting results probably occur because of different levels of responsiveness which are an inherent or culturally imprinted function of western masculinity and femininity. Further, discovering and defining for oneself what it means to be a man or a woman is an important developmental task for college students. Men and women, therefore, may negatively and positively over-react to "culture" and the arts, especially during the first two years. If these forces are at work it becomes especially important that colleges discover ways to define masculinity so that enjoyment of poetry, fiction, classical music, and modern art more often can be included. It becomes especially important for colleges to work against stereotypic and narrow definitions of masculinity and femininity--to expand the range of satisfactions and productive enjoyments for both men and women. That is a primary purpose of liberal education and a primary aim of human development.

If a college shares these values--for they are issues of value--the findings offer some clues for action. Aim for a substantial group of students who enter with at least moderate levels of cultural sophistication and enjoyment. Amplify opportunities for intellectual exchange and challenge among peers, and for sharing feelings, reactions, sensitivities--and undertake to do this both in class and out. Temper the singular emphasis on cognitive processes and legitimize time spent in study activities which involve affective processes as well. Increase the occasions where study of poetry, fiction, music, and art can be pursued out of interest and enjoyment, and in such contexts favor playfulness and creativity over "work" and analysis. Foster wider acquaintance with faculty members and more frequent informal conversations outside of class. If a college takes such actions, these studies, as well as other research and theory suggest that greater gains in cultural sophistication will follow.

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[8]Chickering, A. W. Civil liberties and the experience of college. Journal of Higher Education, 1970.

Table 1

Net Change in Cultural Sophistication

Modified Sign Test Results

	Poetry		Fiction		Classical Music		Modern Art	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Elder	+0.22	+0.07	+0.13	-0.98	+0.44	+0.91	+0.79	+2.15**
Divinity	+0.33	+1.92**	-1.54*	+0.16	+0.23	-0.59	+0.84	+1.99**
Woodbine	-0.83	+0.42	-0.70	-0.84	+0.84	+2.16**	+0.32	+1.17
Simon	-0.84	-0.12	-0.55	-0.35	+0.93	+1.32*	+1.93**	+0.73
Stonewall	+1.32*	-1.26	0.00	0.00	+1.38*	+0.24	+2.31**	-0.49
Friendly	+0.22	+1.33*	-0.66	-0.97	+0.35	-1.16	+0.17	+1.23
Savior	+0.42	+0.21	-2.46**	+0.41	-0.29	-0.29	-0.26	-0.25

Note: N's for men range from 15 to 60, for women from 16 to 38.

** = $p < .05$; * = $p < .10$

Table 2

Second Year Scores for "Moderates"

	Poetry		Fiction		Classical Music		Modern Art	
	N	Score	N	Score	N	Score	N	Score
Elder								
Masculine	10	1.90	8	2.50	8	2.13	5	2.00
Feminine	10	2.10	3	2.34	8	2.25	15	2.34
Divinity								
Masculine	10	2.10	5	2.20	8	1.75	8	2.13
Feminine	11	2.55	7	2.43	8	2.00	11	2.00
Woodbine								
Masculine	10	1.80	10	1.70	8	2.00	5	2.00
Feminine	7	2.15	3	2.00	9	2.56	7	2.58
Simon								
Masculine	17	1.65	24	1.96	15	2.00	13	1.93
Feminine	15	2.14	11	2.74	16	2.38	16	2.07
Stonewall								
Masculine	21	1.76	37	2.28	22	1.78	21	2.00
Feminine	9	2.23	10	2.20	4	2.00	10	2.20
Friendly								
Masculine	11	2.09	11	1.91	11	1.82	10	1.40
Feminine	20	2.20	13	2.24	19	1.79	18	2.06

Note: Mean score at entrance for all groups was 2.00. Scores may range from 1.00 to 3.00. Scores above 2.00 reflect increased enjoyment, scores below 2.00 reflect decreased enjoyment.

Table 3

Relationships Between Increased Cultural Sophistication and Selected Institutional Influences

Characteristics	rho
CUES Scores:	
Practicality	-.29
Community	.26
Awareness	.58
Propriety	-.34
Scholarship	.40
At Entrance:	
Percent of students responding enjoy "very much":	
Poetry	.88
Fiction	.63
Classical music	.37
Modern art	.92
Percent indicating primary orientation:	
Vocational	-.07
Academic	-.06
Collegiate	.00
Characteristics of college peer relationships:	
Intellectual exchange and challenge:	
Best friend same sex	.88
Best friend opposite sex	.62
Primary reference group	.71
Increasing range of sensibilities and feelings:	
Best friend same sex	.48
Best friend opposite sex	.79
Primary reference group	-.19
Extra-curricular participation:	
Drama, music, art	.19
Broadcasting, journalism, literature	-.12
Teaching practices:	
Lectures follow text	-.52
Instructor encouraged discussion	-.59
Students argue openly with instructor	.29
Students argue openly with students	.40
Mental activities studying for class:	
Memorizing	-.44
Interpretation	-.50
Applying	-.36
Analyzing	-.43
Synthesizing	-.21
Evaluating	-.68
Reasons for studying:	
To get a good grade	-.75
Finish a requirement	-.59
Avoid getting behind	.19
Interest and enjoyment	.97
Questions of concern	.07
Student-faculty contact:	
No. of individual faculty seen outside of class	.72
No. of conversations out of class	.76

Note: When N=7, Rho=.68 significant at .10, Rho=.75 significant at .05, Rho=.89 significant at .01.